



FEMA

San Benito's "Safe Box" Shuttered Against the Storm

San Benito, TX - "We felt very, very safe. It seemed like we were in a safety deposit box." That's how San Benito Mayor Joe Hernandez describes riding out Hurricane Dolly in his City Hall, Emergency Operations Center – protected by storm shutters.

"We were very grateful for those shutters," Mayor Hernandez added.

On calm days, the almond-colored steel shutters roll up neatly into unobtrusive metal casings above doors and windows. They can be unrolled down to clamp securely over the windows during a storm – such as Hurricane Dolly, which brought winds of more than 55 to 70 miles per hour to San Benito.

"I will never forget that wind and the rain—horizontal rain, for hours and hours. It seemed like it was never going to end," said Martha McClain, San Benito's Community Affairs Officer. McClain was one of a dozen people working in the Emergency Operations Center around the clock for two days during the storm. All around them, Dolly was uprooting trees, tearing roofs apart, and turning debris into airborne missiles.

"I was very grateful that those storm shutters were there during the storm," said McClain. "So much debris was blowing around, big trees coming down. We knew the shutters would prevent missiles coming through the windows and doors. I would not have wanted to be there without them. I remember when our former emergency manager got the grant to install those shutters," McClain said. "He was so proud. And now it paid off."

A few blocks away in this pleasant Rio Grande Valley town of 33,000 people, similar shutters protected the San Benito Public Library. "I wasn't worried about the library at all, because of the shutters," said librarian Cindy Hart.



**Cameron County,
Texas**



Quick Facts

Sector:

Public

Cost:

\$20,000.00 (Estimated)

Primary Activity/Project:

Retrofitting, Structural

Primary Funding:

**Other FEMA funds/ US Department of
Homeland Security**